

# AT-RISK STUDENTS PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

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## ABSTRACT

Research indicates that schools do not always provide students with the skills they need for successful transitions to postsecondary education and work. A transition gap is particularly prevalent for “at-risk” students who have difficulty relating learning to future education and career aspirations. A high school counselor, language arts teacher, and technical college assessment coordinator created Plan for Success, an intervention program designed to facilitate more successful transitions for “at-risk” students. Creation and implementation of Plan for Success interventions are discussed as well as resulting improvement in student transition outcomes.



Are high schools preparing students to transition successfully to postsecondary education and work? The research is not promising. Educators and researchers lament a lack of emphasis on the attitudes, knowledge, and skills required for students to transition successfully to career and educational opportunities afforded them after high school (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Jensen & Madison, 2004; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999; Wakefield, 2004; Zunker, 1998). Even high school graduates themselves report feeling unprepared for postsecondary education and careers (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2005). One study reports that at least half of the participants could not identify anyone in school who advised them about the transition process (Ferris State University, 2002). The

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2005) underscores the importance of the process—for students to be successful in education and careers beyond high school, an increased focus on student transition is not just desirable, it is required. Helping students acquire transition planning skills is critical to their success.

School counselors are uniquely qualified to help students become more successful planners for transitioning beyond high school. School improvement and school counseling research repeatedly indicates that enhanced comprehensive counseling programs are needed to address the transition challenge (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005; Anderson, 2004; Dahir, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; SREB, 2005; Wakefield, 2004). Transition programs are often informally (rather than systematically) provided (Jensen & Madison, 2004). Recruiting students for dual enrollment programs, communicating market and labor information, assisting with applications, promoting goal-setting, and identifying personalized strategies for attaining goals are often provided only for a few students who know the right questions to ask or who are in the right place at the right time to receive these services. Most students need systematic support to convert aspirations into concrete, coherent plans consistent with future goals (Dahir, 2004; Jensen & Madison). Needed are transitional programs with intentional, focused activities and personalized assistance, resulting in a student’s plan to succeed in postsecondary education and careers (ASCA, 2005; ASCA, 2004; National Career Development Guidelines [NCDA], 1989; SREB).

A concrete action plan is especially imperative for “at-risk” students—individuals classified as unmotivated, unfocused, and unsuccessful in school; minority;

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disabled; and/or poor (Anderson, 2004; Comer, 1988; Conger, Conger, & Elder, 1997; Hines & Wakefield, 2004; McLoyd, 1998; Wakefield, 2004). It is increasingly important for school counselors to proactively identify and respond to complex academic, social, and personal issues that differentiate education and career futures for this group of students (Dahir, 2004; Dahir & Stone, 2003). Targeted interventions to close a transition gap are needed for disengaged, unfocused, and unsuccessful students who are unprepared for the challenges of entering and remaining in postsecondary education/training programs.

#### *Plan for Success Intervention*

With specific focus on improving transition outcomes for at-risk students, a school counselor and senior language arts teacher at a large suburban high school in the Southeast examined disaggregated data of previous high school graduates (Class of 2005) in a senior technical-diploma language arts class. This review revealed several critical at-risk elements of the group. Students in this class had a mean of 12 discipline referrals and 26.6 days absent. They had also been unsuccessful in higher level academic courses and had chosen the career-technical diploma track, which requires no foreign language and three units of mathematics (instead of the four required for the college preparatory diploma). Of the 28 students enrolled in the class, 17 students were male, 19 held minority status, and 12 had been enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. Almost a fourth of the students had received a certificate of high school attendance rather than a diploma because they had not passed state-mandated graduation tests. Of this group, only 3 students had applied to postsecondary schools and requested final transcripts be forwarded—indicating few concrete plans for essential postsecondary education/training so necessary to maximize career attainment.

To improve transition planning skills for the next senior technical language arts class (Class of 2006), the school counselor, language arts teacher, and assessment coordinator of the local technical college collaboratively created Plan for Success. Components of *Plan for Success* interventions were based upon the framework of Jensen and Madison's (2004) Alpha Model. A comprehensive approach, this framework was chosen because it proposes shared responsibility—counselors, educators, parents, and community—for preparing students to transition successfully to postsecondary education and careers. The model's strength is its unique inclusion of a conferencing phase, an experience in which both a mentor and student participate in authentic dialogue during which the student takes the lead. The model

consists of six instructional phases, which are not linearly sequenced. In four phases of the model (introspection, exploration, evaluation, and planning), Plan for Success activities deviated little from traditional exploratory and planning activities. In the fifth and sixth phases (preparation and conferencing), the value added was student development of portfolios, called Plan for Success, including student-led conferences.

The purpose of the *Plan for Success* program was improvement of student education/career transition skills and improvement in academic writing performance on career-related tasks. Student-created *Plan for Success* portfolios (including a personal action plan) directed job shadowing experiences within the building and served as the basis for student-led conferences. Faculty members in the high school were members of the transition intervention team in their roles as job shadow mentors and conference partners. The program was a culminating project for senior technical-diploma language arts students and was implemented in the fall and spring semesters, 2005-2006.

Specifically, program objectives targeted improvement in skills necessary for successful education/career transitions (ASCA, 2004; NCDA, 1989; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, and Saunders, 1996a):

- Identification of personal interests and skills as they relate to desired education majors and career paths;
- Utilization of various types of resources for information about and requirements for desired postsecondary education/career paths;
- Creation of a resume;
- Identification of personal academic strengths and weaknesses as they relate to desired education/career paths;
- Identification of negative thoughts that may erect barriers to attainment of desired education/career paths;
- Identification of necessary steps for choosing and attaining a desired career and/or education path;
- Identification of an education major and postsecondary school/training program to prepare for a desired career path;
- Creation of a step-by-step personalized action plan for attaining a desired education/career path;
- Development of reflective writing skills in the career planning and management process, including improvement in focus and development, organization, fluency, and conventional usage/mechanics.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of *Plan for Success* interventions to improve education and career transition skills for a group of at-risk high school seniors. The study answered the following five questions derived from program objectives: Did students believe that skills in education and career planning improved as a result of *Plan for Success*? Did faculty mentors agree with students that improved skills were acquired? Did student reflective writing performance improve as a result of *Plan for Success*? Did student transition behavior improve (i.e., was there an increase in the number of student applications to postsecondary institutions and requests to forward final transcripts)? Did students perceive *Plan for Success* as valuable?

## Method

### Participants

After several meetings in which the school counselor and the language arts teacher developed a profile of seniors (Class of 2006) in the technical language arts class, the second block class was chosen as a sample of convenience because it was the only senior technical language arts class offered that term. Members of the class possessed many of the same “at-risk” characteristics as the previous class (Class of 2005). Twenty three students began the project with 4 students unable to complete the project for two primary reasons: 3 students withdrew from school, and 1 student was suspended for a serious disciplinary infraction. The total number of participants was 19.

The class profile of *Plan for Success* participants revealed students at-risk for transitioning successfully to postsecondary education and careers because of past unsuccessful school experiences, credit recovery problems, attendance/discipline records, and other issues such as special education placement and socioeconomic and/or minority status. Writing achievement data also indicated low performance for this class of technical/career students. Several students still needed to complete portions of the state-mandated Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), including 7 who needed to pass the writing portion of the tests. In addition, over half of the class (52%) had scores in the 24th percentile or below on writing components of their most recent PSAT test administration.

Table 1 describes participants in the *Plan for Success* program. Examination of data for outliers describing the mean for discipline referrals, days absent, and grade point average revealed that only the mean for

discipline referrals was affected by extreme scores. One student had received 54 discipline referrals. Data for days absent and grade point average clustered about the mean. Thus, the median is reported only for number of discipline referrals.

**Table 1**

### *Plan for Success* Participants (N=19)

Gender	
Male	13
Female	6
Enrollment in Free or Reduced-Lunch Program	
Yes	9
No	10
Ethnicity	
White	6
Black	5
Hispanic	4
Asian	3
Multiracial	1
Special Education Placement	
Yes	4
No	15
Mean Number Discipline Referrals	14.21
Median Number of Discipline Referrals	9
Mean Days Absent	28.16
Mean Grade Point Average	1.903

### Interventions

Based upon Jensen and Madison's (2004) Alpha model of a career intervention system that utilizes shared responsibility, *Plan for Success* interventions consisted of activities appropriate to each of six phases—introspection, exploration, evaluation, planning, preparation, and conferencing. The school counselor and language arts teacher delivered learning activities to support all phases and coordinated involvement of faculty mentors and the technical college assessment director.

### *Introspection*

The introspection phase asks students to explore interests, skills, values, and needs through self-assessment instruments and activities designed to help students set education and career goals (Jensen & Madison, 2004). During several sessions in school computer labs in addition to the traditional classroom setting, the language arts teacher and counselor shared instructional responsibilities utilizing the Georgia Career Information System (GCIC, 2005), reflective writing assignments, and organization of assessments and assignments into student portfolios.

An additional activity in the introspection phase was student completion of the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (CTI, Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996a) to identify self-defeating thoughts that could erect self-imposed barriers for future learning and planning. After determining levels of intensity of self-defeating career thoughts, students participated in group cognitive restructuring activities to challenge and re-direct negative thoughts to maximize their ability to overcome obstacles and make appropriate education and career decisions (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996b).

### *Exploration*

The exploration phase asks students to identify and investigate career options by relating interests, ambitions, high school courses and activities, postsecondary majors, and other information to a desired list of career options (Jensen & Madison, 2004). In other words, students relate personal characteristics to the world of work. Throughout the self-assessments, students explored specific postsecondary colleges and training programs, education majors, and careers that matched criteria entered by students. Other exploration activities included a visit of student ambassadors from local technical and 2-year colleges to discuss admission criteria, program offerings, and personal anecdotes describing the college experience.

### *Evaluation*

The evaluation phase is characterized by students' prioritizing career options and examining how well these options "satisfy or frustrate" (Jensen & Madison, 2004, p. 79). Students begin to see themselves as learners and workers by examining how well the career environment is a reflection of who they are and what they want to be. During this phase students narrowed their education and career focus by selecting a desirable career—the ideal job—to describe and reflect on appropriateness to interests, skills, and academic strengths and weaknesses. Students also designed a

personal logo in which they presented visual symbols of themselves and their education/career future. This logo served as the title page for the *Plan for Success* portfolio.

### *Planning*

The planning phase encompassed development of a resume (GCIC, 2005) and personalized action plan that specified steps and strategies to attain the ideal job. The *Plan for Success* Personal Action Plan was adapted from Sampson et al.'s (1996b) Individual Action Plan, which includes future activities to be completed, a ranking or prioritizing of these activities, a list of resources (people or information) needed to complete activities, a deadline for each activity, and a completion status check. Students were encouraged to continue to identify and re-direct negative career thoughts as they developed their

## **Plan for Success**

### *Preparation*

The next two phases, preparation and conferencing, are typically delivered informally in career guidance programs. Students are generally left on their own to engage in activities outlined by the Personal Action Plan. The nature of the at-risk student, however, makes it imperative for the collaborative team to design concrete preparation and conferencing interventions that provide authentic, "put-into-action" experiences. The preparation phase is the point at which students personally engage in implementing their plans by registering for appropriate courses, developing portfolios, and applying to colleges or training programs (Jensen & Madison, 2004).

The *Plan for Success* project included four activities to prepare students in authentic, real-world ways:

- directed guidance in applying to a postsecondary school of choice;
- provision of a postsecondary entrance/placement examination—the COMPASS (ACT, 2006);
- immediate scoring of COMPASS results and advisement on technical college program admission;
- completion of a written *Plan for Success* portfolio to showcase acquisition of real-world skills, development of self-assessment abilities, enhancement of reflective writing skills, and evaluation of student progress toward goals (Juniewicz, 2003; Luescher & Sinn, 2003; Whitsed, 2006) ;
- participation in job shadowing experiences adapted from Groundhog Shadow Day activities (Job Shadow Coalition, 2006) and mentored by faculty within the school building.

Research indicates that job shadowing improves the transition process from high school to college, connects learning in school to work, provides “access for students who have not had access” (Gehring, 2001, p. 2), and serves to expose students to careers they may not otherwise have considered (Dervarics, 2006; Luecking & Gramlich, 2003; Lewis, 2005). Job shadowing components of *Plan for Success* were implemented within the school building and enabled students to connect with caring, professional faculty and staff who volunteered as job shadowing mentors and later as conferencing partners.

### *Conferencing*

During the conferencing phase students met with mentors to discuss job shadowing experiences and *Plan for Success* portfolios. The dialogue between mentors and students is key to the success of the conferencing phase (Jensen & Madison, 2004). The first part of the conference was led by job shadowing mentors, who facilitated student reflections about lessons learned and attitudes formed about the job shadowing experience.

The second, and most important, part of the conference was student-led. The impact of student-led conferences cannot be overemphasized. Because adults traditionally control learning in schools, students seldom have the opportunity to take charge of their own learning (Goodlad, 1984; Juniewicz, 2003). Research suggests that use of portfolios in student-led conferences genuinely engages students in their own learning (Luescher & Sinn, 2003, p. 0).

During student-led conferences students used *Plan for Success* portfolios as a guide for discussion of education and career goals—logos, interests and skills, resumes, ideal career, desired postsecondary school/program of study, Personal Action Plan, self-defeating negative thoughts, and reflective writing samples. During the dialogue mentors supported students’ education /career goals and helped to refine action plans, if appropriate.

### *Instruments*

To determine whether students benefited from *Plan for Success* interventions, the counselor and language arts teacher utilized several instruments and types of evaluation in addition to student behavior data. Counselor and teacher concurred that different types of data would be useful—students’ perceptions, mentors’ perceptions, congruence between students’ and mentors’ perceptions, student reflective writing samples, student portfolios, and student behavior patterns.

Student perception data were gathered through use of a counselor-designed instrument (Appendix A) developed from the ASCA Career Development Competencies and Standards Checklist (ASCA, 2004). After development of the *Plan for Success* portfolio (but before student-led conferences), students indicated their perception of improvement (or not) in career development skills from pre- to post-project. Ratings were based on a Likert Scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is “I have no knowledge of the skill and do not know how to use it at all” to 4, “Even though I know I can improve, I have acquired the skill.” Skills were descriptive of project objectives.

After student-led conferences during which students discussed their future plans, job shadowing mentors used a similar instrument to evaluate perceptions of their students’ attainment of equivalent skills. Item content for the mentor instrument was the same as the student instrument, but an additional rating of 5 was added to the Likert Scale—“I have no basis for rating the skill.” In addition, instructions for participating in student-led conferences were added as changes in voice—from “I have” (student scale) to “the student has” (mentor scale).

Both instruments were designed by the counselor with no reliability or validity data to report. However, instrument items were formulated from the ASCA Model Sample Competencies and Standards Checklist (ASCA, 2004), a national model and workbook utilized by professional school counselors and serving as a basis for model school counseling programs.

In addition to perception data, student academic performance and behavior data were also collected. A pre-project reflective writing assignment designed by the counselor and language arts teacher asked students to reflect on future education and career goals as they related to personal characteristics, experiences, interests, skills, and executable plans. The identical reflective writing assignment was given at the end of the project. The identical assignment was utilized because it reflected project objectives and asked students to construct their own responses. Both the counselor and language arts teacher felt that if students could articulate effectively the points contained in the writing assignment, students would demonstrate skills listed in project objectives.

The rubric used to evaluate both assignments was the *Gwinnett County Literary Rubric, 9-12*, used for writing-across-the-curriculum at the high school. The rubric consists of six levels of four writing domains—focus and development (content), organization, fluency, and conventions (usage and mechanics). For purposes of this project, each writing level equated to a numerical

value (level 6 = 90 and above; level 5 = 80-89; level 4 = 74-79; level 3 = 70-73; level 2 = 65-69; and level 1 = 64 and below). The language arts teacher evaluated both reflective writing assignments utilizing this rubric. The teacher also evaluated *Plan for Success* portfolios via a teacher-designed checklist that included artifacts in all six phases of the transition process—introspection, exploration, evaluation, planning, preparation, and conferencing.

Student behavior change was evaluated by determining the number of students who applied and requested submission of a final transcript to a postsecondary school/training program. The test of any transition intervention is whether or not students actually execute their plans to enroll in postsecondary programs. The counselor and language arts teacher believed that student intent to enroll though completion of the application process and request for final transcript would be another valid way to assess acquisition of transition planning skills.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Base 9.0. Two paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare means of student pre- and post-intervention perceptions of career management skills and to compare means of pre- and post-intervention reflective writing performance. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare means of post-intervention perceptions of each student and his/her mentor. The t-test is appropriate when samples are small (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) and when one set of scores “‘goes with’ one and only one” other set of scores (Huck & Cormier, 1996, p. 268). Variation in student grades on *Plan for Success* portfolios and frequency of post-secondary applications and final transcript requests were also evaluated to determine impact of interventions.

### Results

Data analysis revealed that *Plan for Success* interventions targeted for at-risk high school seniors enhanced their education/career transition skills and behaviors. A paired sample t-test of student perceptions before and after the program indicated that student perceptions improved significantly for all targeted transition skills after the interventions (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Student Perception of Acquisition of Transition Planning Skills (N = 19)**

	Mean	SD	t	Sig.	Effect
Pre-Intervention		20.1053	6.59878		
Post-Intervention		38.2105	1.39758		
Paired Pre & Post	-18.10526	6.52257	-12.099	.000	3.926

Researchers believe that data analysis indicating no significant difference in mentors’ and students’ perceptions of transition planning skills was also important to note (Table 3). Even though non-significant results are not normally reported, few differences in mentor and student ratings indicate that both parties evaluated skill acquisition in a similar manner. In other words, perceptions of students and professional adults were essentially congruent, revealing that both faculty and students felt confident that students had successfully acquired the targeted education and career transition skills.

Participant reflective writing performance was also analyzed. Utilizing the *Gwinnett County Literacy Rubric, 9-12*, researchers compared student scores for the pre- and post-intervention writing assignment. The result of the paired sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two means (p = .000) with improved student writing performance demonstrated on the post-intervention reflective assignment. Another way of describing the improved results for this group of students is that approximately 79% of participants improved their writing performance on the second assignment. Participants improved their focus and development (content), organization, fluency, and usage/mechanics on a reflective, career-related writing task.

**Table 3**  
**Comparison of Mentors’ and Students’ Perceptions of Transition Planning Skills (N=19)**

	Mean	SD	t	Sig.	Effect
Student	38.2105	1.39758			
Mentor	38.6842	1.88717			
Student-Mentor	-.47368	2.03766	-1.013	.324	-.327

**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Pre- and Post Intervention Writing Performance (N=19)**

	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-Intervention	68.2105	8.7406		
Post-Intervention	79.8421	12.0197		
Paired Pre & Post	-11.6316	11.4659	-4.422	.000

In addition to analysis of the reflective writing assignment, the language arts teacher evaluated students' *Plan for Success* portfolios using the teacher-created checklist. The mean average of *Plan for Success* portfolios was 97.63 (out of 100 points), a high level of student completion and performance particularly noteworthy for a group of students characterized as at-risk.

Analysis of student transition behaviors indicated that of the 19 participants who completed the *Plan for Success* program, 9 applied either to a postsecondary 2-year or technical college, 1 withdrew from school, 1 received permanent suspension for disciplinary infractions, 4 received high school certificates because of failure on one or more sections of the GHSGT, and 3 did not complete course requirements for graduation. Only one student who graduated did not apply or request a final transcript. Student applications and transcript requests increased threefold from the previous class. It is also important to note that all 7 students who had not passed the state-mandated writing test at the beginning of the school year did pass the GHSWT after the interventions.

## Discussion

Results of the *Plan for Success* program demonstrate that interventions resulted in improvements in participants' skills in education and career transition planning. Students not only believed they possessed effective planning skills, they demonstrated these skills to professional adults, an impressive result for any student, but especially for at risk students. They improved their ability to relate personal interests and skills to career pathways, identify resources for career information, develop resumes, understand academic strengths and weaknesses as relevant to career goals, identify personal barriers to success, develop strategies for meeting goals, identify potential postsecondary colleges and training programs, understand admission requirements, and communicate plans with mentors.

Data also indicate that participants believed that

*Plan for Success* was effective and valuable to them. Participant comments included the following: "I always thought I could never go to college....not true;" "Once I started writing, I couldn't stop;" "I love animals but didn't know I could get a job doing what I like;" "I'm not going to end up like my father....on the streets." When considered in light of the at-risk profile of participants, the writer believes that positive perceptions have the potential for promoting further skill enhancement. Research has indicated that feelings of efficacy lead to behavior-engagement rather than behavior-avoidance and are important variables in student performance, particularly as related to task persistence (Bandura, 1986; Lent & Hackett, 1987; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991).

Student reflective writing performance also significantly improved after *Plan for Success* interventions. Writing intervention activities were designed intentionally for students to have authentic experiences in "real-world" preparation for education and career transitions (making applications, taking entrance tests, job shadowing) as well as participation in traditional exploration and planning activities. These experiences served as "pre-writing"—or planning for writing—to give students the communication tools necessary for describing themselves as learners and planners.

Students also demonstrated through portfolios that they had successfully engaged in *Plan for Success* tasks appropriate for maximizing personal development, one of the benefits of portfolio creation (Whitsed, 2006). The high value of the mean for evaluation of student portfolios verified that students successfully completed a process by which they could make future education and career decisions. Much has been written about the importance of using authentic assessment that focuses on "real-world" situations (Juniewicz, 2003). For this group of students, using *Plan for Success* portfolios in student-led conferences provided significant value for personalizing the planning process for real-world transitioning and equipping participants with life-long career management skills.

## Limitations

Delivering the *Plan for Success* program to only one class of students who served as a convenience sample prevents any collective generalizations. The study was neither an experimental design, nor were instruments formally analyzed for validity and reliability. *Plan for Success* was an intervention program developed by practicing counselors, faculty, and administrators addressing local student needs. Given these limitations, participants possessed characteristics inherent in the literature describing students at-risk for failure to

graduate and for an inability to transition successfully to postsecondary education and training. Instrument items were consistent with standards and competencies addressed by the ASCA model (2005), and data were analyzed utilizing a variety of evaluation methods. *Plan for Success* developers believe that the results suggest several implications for high school counselors in developing future interventions.

### *Implications*

Only 10 of 19 students in this class were actually qualified to apply to a postsecondary school, underscoring the issue that transition planning is only one type of assistance needed by this group of at-risk students. Academic failure and other complex social/emotional factors impact at-risk student decision-making and transitioning. Seven students either received a high school certificate (rather than a diploma) or did not graduate, resulting in scheduled retests to complete assessment requirements or a return to high school to complete graduation course requirements. In addition, discipline and attendance problems plagued two additional students, resulting in their inability to complete the school year. Thus, it goes without saying that transition planning cannot occur in isolation. Future transition interventions for at-risk students should be tied to academic performance and behavior issues. These interventions should include mentors who provide academic support focused on student success in more rigorous academic courses, strategies alleviating attendance and behavior problems, and continued real-world application for academic learning. Students need support in developing self-management and academic skills to move successfully to the next level.

Such complex, interrelating issues require a “collective response” (DuFour et al., 2004, p. 64). The implication is that school counselors cannot work in isolation from faculty, administrators, parents, and the community to implement research-supported programs that address improved learning and successful transitions for all students. Future interventions can include parents as volunteers in the school community, even if they are not parents of the at-risk students themselves. Business and industry can provide venues for job shadowing experiences as well as incentives for students participating in future *Plan for Success* programs. Shared responsibility can lead to student change.

Implications center on a central factor—successful transition outcomes are enhanced by programs that provide systematic exposure to an array of real-world experiences (Luecking & Gramlich, 2003). Students who have been unsuccessful in school for social, emotional, and academic reasons need formal,

intentional systems of interventions to close achievement and transition gaps. As counselors participate in a “pyramid of interventions” (DuFour et al., 2004, p. 60) to support students who experience difficulty, counselors demonstrate a commitment to school improvement efforts and become a force that fosters access and opportunity for every student.

The challenge of structuring comprehensive systems, however, is difficult as high school counselors move from providing a preponderance of individual services to becoming managers of education and career advising processes (Jensen & Madison, 2004). It is not an easy transition. For example, not all teachers volunteered for *Plan for Success* to serve as job shadow mentors and caring adults for student-led conferences. Matching the right student to the right job and mentor was not always simple. Several students had a “history” of attendance, discipline, and/or academic issues with several of the faculty volunteers. Even preparation for administration of the COMPASS on the high school campus encountered obstacles in the form of technological difficulties (both obtaining appropriate permission and complying with technology specifications) in addition to scheduling difficulties. Finding time to collaborate with team members presented its own challenges.

Despite the coordinating, managing, and consulting difficulties, however, shouldering the entire responsibility for intervention programs is not an option for professional school counselors who serve as leaders and team members. School counselors must collaborate with other stakeholders to create a culture of learning for the entire school community by helping to raise student aspirations and aligning them with successful transitions beyond high school.

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Success unit compared to your perception of the skill after the unit.

Before After

- |       |       |  |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | 1. I have completed a career-interest survey and candiscuss at least one of my interests as it relates to my career pathway.               |
| _____ | _____ | 2. I can identify two places to find information about mycareer pathway.   |
| _____ | _____ | 3. I can identify two skills related to my career pathway.   |
| _____ | _____ | 4. I have a resume of my interests, skills, experience, and accomplishments.   |
| _____ | _____ | 5. I know my academic strengths and weaknesses related to my broad career path.  |
| _____ | _____ | 6. I can identify negative thoughts that may hinder me from reaching my full potential.  |
| _____ | _____ | 7. I have identified some necessary steps for meeting my career goal.  |
| _____ | _____ | 8. I have tentatively chosen a program of study and a postsec-ondary school/training program that will help me prepare for my career path. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. I know at least two requirements for entering the postsecondary school/training program of my choice.                                   |
| _____ | _____ | 10. I have discussed information about a specific career path with my parents and/or school staff.   |

## APPENDIX A

### Career Management Perception Survey (Student)

Using the scale below, rate how well you think you have acquired the career management skills below. These skills measure your ability to investigate the world of work according to how well you know yourself and your ability to make informed career decisions.

1. I have no knowledge of the skill and do not know how to use it at all.
2. I have a little knowledge of the skill but cannot use it very well.
- 3 I have knowledge about the skill and can use it somewhat.
4. Even though I know I can improve, I have acquired the skill.

Rate your perception of your skill before the *Plan for*